

Introduction

Personal Statement

As I lay on the carpeted floor of the library lounge at University de Grenoble in France two long years ago, a realization suddenly hit me as I worked tirelessly to complete my explication du text for Guillaume Apollinaire's poem "La Lorelei" for my Poems et Proses du XX Siècle class. My approach to literature was that of close reading and formalism - staying incredibly near to the text. At that moment, I knew this was it!

Certainly, however, proved to be rather unstable. I knew it was important not to shut myself off from other approaches to literature, so when I returned to Swarthmore from Grenoble, I took two courses that I knew would be highly theoretical: Women Writers 1790-1830 and Feminist Literary Criticism.

Through these courses, I embraced an amalgamated technique to literature that combines my direct relationship with the text and theoretical work. This approach is full of potential, produces great results, and has been a pleasure to learn.

This year, I plan to apply my literary approach to two major projects. With the help of a \$2,400 National Endowment for the Humanities Younger Scholars Summer Research Grant, I proposed an ambitious research project – analyzing Elie Wiesel's novels and their silent portrayals of Holocaust-related events. Through this project, I seek to explore how conventional language fails in describing such atrocities and how Wiesel circumvents this limitation using silence as his main tool.

My senior English thesis will be an expansion of a prior project, wherein I research the power that Wiesel wields through silence in his novels and writing technique. The insights drawn from my French fluency have been invaluable since most of Wiesel's works were originally written in French; thus, offering me access to key sources necessary for close formalist readings. Additionally, theoretical work has contributed greatly to this endeavor, further deepening the exploration into how Wiesel gives silent moments resonance throughout his writings.

Body Paragraph

This year, I'm involved in a remarkable self-designed research project that has superseded the comprehensive examinations at Swarthmore English Department. My focus is on British poetry published after World War I and how these poems reflect an unprecedented kind of warfare - one in which death could be mass-produced mechanically and without human contact. It's been truly eye-opening to explore this unique period in history as well as its literature.

After taking a closer look and noticing the alarming amount of poems that utilize biblical or mythical imagery, I've come to realize just how outdated modern images can appear. For years I had my sights set on pursuing English as a field for graduate work. However, by double majoring in both English and sociology-anthropology during college has tremendously enriched my view of literature today.

My enthusiasm for anthropology has twice motivated me to explore the literature of non-European cultures; both times, I was delighted with what I found. Through composing my Black African Writer papers, I combined a substantial amount of theoretical research with rigorous formalist textual analysis and in-depth reading. Additionally, thanks to numerous exchanges on this project with Prof. Wallace Mann—the R. Talbot Sondheim Professor of African Studies at Swarthmore College—I benefited immensely from his expertise and guidance.

For my second exploration into foreign terrain, I wrote an exegesis of Isaiah 65:17-25 for Introduction to Hebrew Scriptures. As I had taken a course in biblical Hebrew (Religion 93) and could read the original language with moderate comprehension, working from the Hebrew text was incredibly enjoyable. Thoroughly analyzing each word and sometimes even individual letters as necessary was immensely fulfilling!

This past year, my two primary projects revolved around war literature. My thesis and senior project were naturally intertwined in their concept which allowed me to gain new perspectives from one that I could apply to the other. Fortunately, this approach has been very successful for me thus far! As a student at the University of Colorado-Boulder, exploring twentieth-century literature is something I want to continue doing yet now feel ready to challenge myself by opening up boundary

lines and taking off into some fresh directions as well.

Every time I take an academic approach to a type of literature that has long held my interest, it turns out to be an incredibly enjoyable and successful experience. Old English literature holds this kind of fascination for me - the combination of gut-level enjoyment and scholarly exploration is unbeatable!

Although I had never studied Old English texts, a cassette tape I owned held three of my favorite stories in the language: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Caedmon, and The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Rangel. This treasured item is one that has stayed close to my heart for many years.

When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I find solace at the Swarthmore library and take part in a comforting activity of listening to an antiquated recitation of Beowulf. With a vintage recording playing in the background, I delve into both Old English and modern translations to pick up on some phrases here and there. By mimicking what is heard aloud combined with being able to comprehend through translation, this has become my own personal way of learning minimalistic pieces from this language—and it's something that further motivates me to continue progressing!

I am delighted about the distribution requirements since they will enable me to dive into areas that wouldn't have been possible at Swarthmore. It is only by doing this that I can continue to grow and expand my knowledge of literature. Rather than being a one-off experience in the University de Grenoble library, I want it to be part of an ongoing process of learning and personal development.

Constantly looking for ways to refine and evolve my approach to literature is a crucial part of me being an unwavering scholar and enthusiast. I want this journey of learning never to end, as it will help keep my love for books alive forever.